

whether these patterns are to be honored or overcome should be a matter of individual choice.

*See also Pederasty; Slavery.*

Wayne R. Dynes

### ACTIVIST, GAY

Familiar in the 1970s, the expression "gay activist" has become less common owing to the ebbing of the more strenuous and utopian aspects of the gay liberation movement. It served to denote someone choosing to devote a major share of his or her energies to the accomplishment of social change that will afford a better life for homosexual men and lesbian women. Its most famous institutional embodiment, subsequently imitated in many parts of the world, was the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA), formed in New York City in the wake of the 1969 *Stonewall Rebellion*. The group took as its symbol the Greek letter lambda, apparently because of its association with energy transformation in physics. Unlike the New Left, GAA was expressly a "one issue" organization, refusing to submerge the cause of gay rights in a network of social change groups, what came to be known as the Rainbow Coalition. In Europe the term "gay militant" is sometimes found as a variant, but in North America the word militant is generally eschewed because of its Old Left connotations and limitations.

The history of the idea of gay activism displays a complicated pedigree. The concept is rooted ultimately in the perennial contrast between the active and the contemplative life—the latter being traditionally preferred. In 1893, however, the French Catholic philosopher Maurice Blondel in essence turned the tables in his book *L'Action*. Blondel, in keeping with the vitalist currents of the day, held that philosophy must take its start not from abstract thought alone but from the whole of our life—thinking, feeling, willing.

Shortly thereafter, in Central Europe Rudolph Eucken, who received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1906, developed his own philosophy of *Aktivismus*. At this time many figures of Germany's political and literary-artistic avant-garde were drawn to Franz Pfemfert's periodical *Die Aktion* (1911–32). Further permutations occurred with the Flemish nationalist *Activists* in Belgium and the Hungarian artistic movement, *Aktivismus*, that arose in the aftermath of World War I. As early as 1915, however, Kurt Hiller, a political theorist and journalist, as well as an advocate of homosexual rights, drew several strands together in his broader concept of *Aktivismus*, urging the intelligentsia to abandon ivory tower isolation and participate fully in political life. How the term activist in its political (and gay movement) sense reached North America in the 1970s can only be surmised. The mediation of German refugee scholars is likely, as is suggested by this 1954 quotation by Arthur Koestler: "he was not a politician but a propagandist, not a 'theoretician' but an 'activist'." (The reference, from *The Invisible Writing*, is to Willi Münzenberg, an energetic Communist leader in Paris in the 1930s.)

Wayne R. Dynes

### ADELSWÄRD FERSEN, BARON JACQUES D' (1880–1923)

French aristocrat and writer. Descended from Marie Antoinette's lover Axel Fersen, the wealthy young baron wrote several volumes of poetry and fiction in the first decade of the century, including *Hymnaire d'Adonis*, *Chansons légères*, *Lord Lyllian*, and *Une jeunesse*. In addition, he edited and contributed to twelve monthly numbers of a literary periodical, *Akademios* (1909). At the age of twenty-three he was arrested for taking photographs of naked Parisian schoolboys, but was allowed to go into exile on the